

Park and Recreation

Mission. The mission of the Park and Recreation Department is to provide a cost-effective system of safe and attractive parks and recreation land, facilities and programs that enhance the beautification of the City, provide for the leisure time pursuits of all Wichita residents and visitors, and promote appreciation of the City's environmental resources.

Overview. The Park and Recreation Department provides recreational opportunities, maintains landscaping at City parks, facilities, and along right-of-ways, and operates a number of cultural and performing arts facilities. The department supports over 3,700 acres of parks and greenways, ten recreation centers, twelve swimming pools, an art center, and numerous youth-based activities and athletics programs.

Current department operating units consist of Administration, Landscape, Forestry & Maintenance Support, Botanica, Parks & Recreation, CityArts, Century II, Expo Hall, Omnisphere, Historical Museum, and the Wichita Boathouse.

Administration is responsible for the leadership, management and direction of the department. The division provides, among other duties, financial planning and reporting, budgeting, payroll support and capital project initiation and development.

Landscape, Forestry & Maintenance Support is charged with maintaining the aesthetic appearance of highly visible plantings and greenways in public places and carrying out a comprehensive tree planting, maintenance, and removal program. The Division also maintains assigned right of way areas. In addition, plumbing, electrical and other maintenance is provided for park facilities.

The Parks and Recreation Division provides basic maintenance and support to the City's 90 parks and athletic fields. All recreational programming, from adult sports to the youth-targeted Summer of Discovery program is coordinated and administered within this division.

Botanica, Century II, Expo Hall, CityArts, the Historical Museum, Wichita Boathouse and the Omnisphere are all divisions of the Park Department. Century II and Expo Hall provide an attractive venue for entertainment and conventions. Botanica is a beautiful botanical garden located in Sim Park, near the Arkansas River. The Boathouse is a popular meeting and reception facility. The Historical Museum and the Omnisphere both

provide educational opportunities in the respective fields of Wichita/Sedgwick County history and in astronomy, although the Omnisphere is scheduled to close in 2000 with the opening of Exploration Place.

The Park and Recreation Department is funded entirely from the General Fund. However, the costs of six divisions — Park and Recreation, CityArts, Century II, Expo Hall, Omnisphere, and the Wichita Boathouse — are offset somewhat by revenue derived from rentals, reimbursements, and fees. In 2001, these revenues are budgeted to total \$3.7 million, or nearly one quarter of Park expenditures.

Finance and Operations. The 2001 Adopted budget for Park provides nearly \$15.4 million from the General Fund and reflects a new organizational structure implemented in 2000. This new structure streamlines maintenance activities into recreation related maintenance or greenway and open space maintenance, a move that is projected to enhance responsiveness and efficiency of this activity. The adopted budget also provides an additional crew to accommodate the increasing need for high level landscaping services.

The Landscape, Forestry and Maintenance Support Division is responsible for a variety of functions, including landscape maintenance (focused on downtown), tree trimming, reforestation, and other right of way maintenance. In the downtown area, staff are responsible for Old Town, the Douglas Streetscape, the East Bank area, and the Museum District. Staff also maintain a variety of statues, monuments and memorials located on park grounds.



Landscape crews maintain over 35 acres in downtown Wichita, including the new Reflection Square Park.

The City has also invested heavily in landscaping freeway corridors, including West Kellogg, K-96 in Northeast Wichita, and Kellogg and Oliver in East Wichita, and the I-235 by-pass in Northwest Wichita. These areas include plantings and trees that are maintained by this division. The 2001 Adopted budget includes an additional three-person crew to accommodate these increasing areas of responsibility.

The core service of the Division remains the pruning and removal of trees located in public areas. Annually, around 17,000 trees are pruned using a systematic neighborhood pruning method. To enhance efficiency of this operation, the City has invested in recent years in equipment, including grapple hooks and bucket trucks.



Utilizing the best technology available, Forestry crews prune or remove nearly 20,000 trees annually.

The Division is also responsible for removing dead or diseased trees. During severe storms, staff are tasked with assisting in debris removal, particularly tree debris. In 1999, due to several severe storms, over 15,000 tons of wood waste debris were removed from City right of ways.

Selected Performance Measures				
	1998	1999	2000	2001
Trees planted	2,388	2,241	2,500	2,500
Trees pruned	15,909	9,969	17,000	17,000
Trees removed	2,245	3,287	2,000	2,000

The City has also engaged in an aggressive reforestation effort, spearheaded by this Division. Annually, 2,500 trees are planted. These trees are planted along thoroughfares, in parks, in public areas, and on easements. In every year since 1986, these efforts have helped Wichita earn the designation of "Tree City, USA." Park Department also participates in a partnership to support Botanica, the Wichita Gardens. Dedicated in

1987, Botanica is a partnership between the City of Wichita and Botanica, Inc. The City provides an annual operating subsidy of \$250,000 for salary support and basic insurance coverage and maintenance support. The privately incorporated Botanica, Inc, provides additional operating funding and coordinates volunteer support. Attendance at Botanica is on the rise, with 126,000 paid visitors in 1999, up twelve percent from 1998.

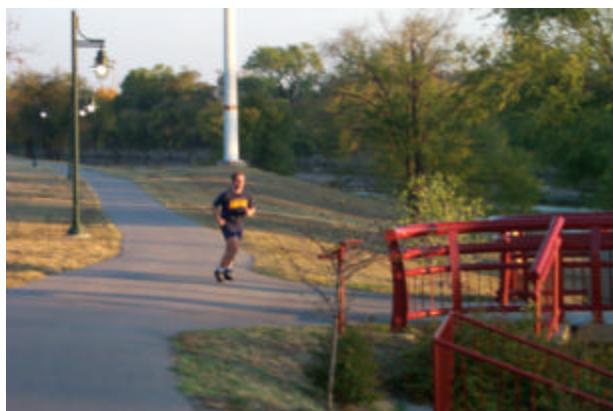
Selected Performance Measures				
	1998	1999	2000	2001
Annual visitors	112,938	126,000	130,000	135,000
Private dollars raised	\$618,300	\$699,000	\$760,000	\$820,000

Parks and Recreation, the Department's largest division, operates ten neighborhood recreation centers, twelve swimming pools, two developing sports complexes, and offers a variety of athletic programs and leagues for youth and adults. The Division also enhances leisure opportunities for residents by maintaining almost 100 parks totaling over 4,100 acres.

The Parks and Recreation division is budgeted at over \$8 million in 2001. However, this cost is partially offset by user fees and rentals. In 2001, these revenues are projected to total \$1.8 million. Cost recovery of recreational activities depends mostly on the type of activity. Swimming pools have recovered over 50% of their direct costs, while recreation centers have been half that amount.

Selected Performance Measures				
	1998	1999	2000	2001
Cost recovery – recreation centers	26.0%	28.0%	30.0%	32.0%
Cost recovery – swimming pools	52.4%	54.4%	55.4%	56.4%

In addition to over 4,100 acres of parkland, there are 70 playground areas in neighborhood parks. The Park and Recreation Division inspects and maintains this playground equipment to ensure public safety. To facilitate the removal of old, unsafe equipment and its replacement with new, safer equipment that meets current national safety standards, a \$1 million playground improvement plan is currently underway. Staff are also charged with maintaining signs, fencing, picnic tables, drinking and decorative fountains and a variety of other items in and around the City's parks and recreational facilities. Finally, Division staff maintains the City's network of over 38 miles of bike paths and jogging trails.



Park and Recreation staff maintain over 38 miles of bike paths and jogging trails, including this path in Sim Park.

Recreation staff provide athletic programs year round in a variety of sports. Outdoor sports, including baseball, softball, soccer and football, are offered at a many different well maintained facilities, including the new South Lakes Sports Complex, West Side Athletic Field, Planeview Park and others. Staff are responsible for organizing over 90 leagues, with over 200 teams annually, collecting fees, scheduling games and maintaining the fields. In the near future, Park leagues will be scheduled at the developing Northeast Sports Complex, enhancing league activities for Wichitans.



Youth enjoying a soccer game at South Lakes Park, one of the over 90 sports fields maintained by Recreation staff

The Parks and Recreation Division manages and operates Summer of Discovery, a ten-week summer program for children ages 6 to 12. The licensed program is available to all children, regardless of income, with enrollment fees charged on an ability-to-pay basis. In 1999, over one thousand children enjoyed educational and entertaining activities such as boating and water safety, science and nature, sports camps, magic shows, movies, swimming and more.

Additional programming is provided through ten community recreation centers. These facilities host a

variety of classes for all ages, including gymnastics, aerobics, dance, cooking, judo and others. In addition, the recreational facilities offer rooms to rent for meetings or parties.

At the 119-acre Watson Park location in south Wichita, paddle boating, fishing, pony rides, train tours, miniature golf, and concessions are all available. Near the downtown area, the recently renovated Ralph Wulz Riverside Tennis Center offers fourteen lighted tennis courts on a year-round basis. Lessons are available from an on-site tennis professional, and the Center's pro shop maintains a large supply of racquets, balls, and other supplies. A BMX bike track is located in Emery Park in south Wichita, while a bridle path for equestrians is available at Pawnee Prairie Park in west Wichita. Two Frisbee golf courses are located in both Herman Hill and Oak Park.

The Department contributes four staff to the Great Plains Nature Center, a modern, interactive educational facility staffed by local, state and federal personnel. This facility, located at the 282 acre Chisholm Creek Park in north Wichita, serves as the base for the "Wichita Wild" program, providing citizens with opportunities to experience wildlife and to learn about native plants and animals. Nature trails and wildlife viewing areas are both available at the park.

During the summer, the Division operates 12 swimming pools located throughout the City. The pools offer reasonably priced recreational swimming and swimming lessons. Swim teams formed at each pool are also popular activities for youth, as the teams practice and ultimately compete annually in a Citywide swim meet.



Minisa Pool, located in the Riverside neighborhood, is one of twelve revenue-generating swimming pools operated by Park and Recreation every summer.

CityArts is the City's cultural arts center. Opened to the public in 1998, CityArts provides art classes for all ages

at its downtown location on the East Bank. The primary emphasis of programming is on engaging beginners and children in the arts. CityArts offers classes in pottery, sculpture, silversmithing, woodworking, painting, weaving, and other arts.

The Century II/Expo Hall complex in the East Bank area is Wichita's premier venue for entertainment, conventions, trade shows, and meetings. In 1999, the venue hosted thirty-five state conventions, eight regional/national conventions, and four trade shows, with a direct economic impact of \$12.5 million. In addition, Century II/Expo Hall management saw 734,255 people pass through the complex's doors to attend various consumer shows, cultural events, entertainment events, and meetings.

Selected Performance Measures				
	1998	1999	2000	2001
State conventions hosted	22	35	35	35
Attendance at state conventions hosted	50,650	48,585	55,000	55,000
Event days hosted for state conventions	63	60	65	65

The Wichita Boathouse, donated to the City in 1998, offers rental meeting, banquet, and reception facilities. The facility is typically booked at least six months in advance, and in 1999, it generated over \$91,000 in revenue. The Boathouse grounds feature a replica of an America's Cup-winning sailboat.



Park and Recreation operates several premier meeting and banquet facilities, including the Wichita Boathouse.

The Wichita Boathouse continues to be popular with both out-of-town visitors and Wichitans, hosting a wide array of meetings, banquets, and receptions. Highly utilized for wedding receptions, the venue has also hosted international gatherings of corporate executives with significant investments in the Wichita area economy. Upgrades to the catering kitchen have facilitated growth in banquet and reception business.

The Wichita/Sedgwick County Historical Museum, located in the old Wichita City Hall, provides documentation of life in Wichita as it has developed over the decades. City funding provides a portion of the salary and benefits for the museum's director, along with insurance and utilities. Private funding provides additional resources for housing the collection.

Park and Recreation Budget Summary					
	1999 Actual	2000 Adopted	2000 Revised	2001 Adopted	2002 Approved
Personal Services	9,430,405	10,653,920	10,546,050	10,892,150	11,227,780
Contractual Services	3,362,462	3,467,760	3,442,510	3,439,850	3,450,680
Commodities	617,196	677,640	768,730	763,430	762,890
Capital Outlay	185,371	82,920	153,890	91,120	62,220
Other	411,218	240,940	154,870	193,500	193,500
Total Park and Recreation Expenditures	14,006,652	15,123,180	15,066,050	15,380,050	15,697,070
Position Summary					
Total full-time	207	217	218	217	217
Total part-time	661	666	670	669	669
Total FTE	378.75	389.25	390.50	389.00	389.00